

INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE AND WAREHOUSE UNION
PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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TONY SALCIDO OF ILWU LOCAL 13, PCPA

INTERVIEWEE: ANTONIO “TONY” SALCIDO

INTERVIEWERS: HARVEY SCHWARTZ

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[00:00:00] **HARVEY SCHWARTZ:** This is part of the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association Oral History Project and could you tell us your name, date of birth, and what local you’re from?

[00:00:20] **TONY SALCIDO:** My name is Antonio Salcido and I go by Tony and I was born May 20, 1929 and I’m from Local 13.

[00:00:33] **HARVEY:** And where were you born, what town?

[00:00:35] **TONY:** In Wilmington [California] , we had a large family and most of us were born in the house we lived in and that was in Wilmington in 1929.

[00:00:46] **HARVEY:** I happen to know that you had a very rich background and quite an extensive family involvement in the ILWU can you tell us a little bit about that? Who is “Chuchu” Salcido?

[00:00:58] **TONY:** My dad was one of the original longshoremen in 1933 and I also have two uncles who are charter members in Local 13; it was ILA at the time. There are 14 of us in the family and the first three born were boys, so when the late-thirties came along there were all at the age where they would be looking for work and then the work came and made it easier for them to get into the longshore. Besides my dad and my two uncles who were charter members, then I had three brothers who were also were longshoremen by the time I was old enough to be looking for a job.

[00:02:00] **HARVEY:** Can you name all these folks?

[00:02:01] **TONY:** My dad was Cristobal Salcido, his nickname was “Chuchu,” by the people on the waterfront, and that’s kind of ironic in a way because my dad would call everybody “chucho,” which in Spanish meant a mongrel dog. [chuckles] Because the Anglos couldn’t pronounce it the way he did, they turned it around and started calling him “Chuchu.” Then my two uncles, Raymond was one, Julian was another one, and then when my older brothers started working, one was Mike Salcido, “Christy” Salcido, which was Cristobal also, we called him Christy, and then “Frankie” Salcido, who, his real name was Efraín, but everybody called him Frankie. So those were the six that preceded me in my dad’s family.

[00:03:05] **HARVEY:** You went to school in San Pedro [California] ?

[00:03:07] **TONY:** No, I was born and raised in Wilmington, and went to school there at Avalon Grammar School, which was converted to a military post during the War [WWII] , and afterwards was not re-implemented, so it’s no longer there. I went to Fries Avenue School for one year in seventh grade and then to Banning High School, which went from year eight through twelve and that’s where I graduated in 1947.

[00:03:41] **HARVEY:** What did you do after you graduated?

[00:03:43] **TONY:** I joined the service. At that time, it was not far removed from the end of World War II and there was a lot of talk of implementing, or continuing the draft, well not continuing, but re-implementing it. It looked like from all the news in the papers that they were going to have something called “Universal Military Training.” Because there was a lack of soldiers or military personnel, they were offering a year-and-a-half enlistment, so I said, “If they’re going to draft me for two years, and right now I can go in for a year-and-a-half, I’ll go ahead and put in my year-and-a-half and be done with it.”

It was fortunate and unfortunate in a way because the draft didn’t come to pass until after, I think, the Korean War. So I put my year-and-a-half in and I was out by December 19, 1948 and then I came home. When there was extra work, I started longshoring in the early part of ‘49 and then I became an ID, which was actually casual longshoremen, in August, which at that time was under sponsorship so because my dad was a ‘33 member it was easy for me to get an ID at that time.

[00:05:18] **HARVEY:** Why was your dad so legendary?

[00:05:21] **TONY:** He was very active, he was a go-getter. He always had a truck, and he would hire out to the different stevedore companies to move their gear and stuff because the gear wasn’t heavy like it is today, or was afterwards. It was slings, lift boards, dunnage, stuff like that and he’d hire out on the docks and do this gear moving for them. Plus he was a jovial guy, he had a nice personality, he was always joking, and he was just well-known and well-liked. Especially with a nickname like “Chuchu,” it’s kind of sticks with you.

[00:06:19] **HARVEY:** So he was what in Tacoma would be called a “gear man?”

[00:06:23] **TONY:** No, no he was a longshoreman, but he—when they needed transporting the gear, he would move the gear, but he would go back to longshoring. He liked to work bulk, mostly in lumber, because before he longshored, he worked in the lumber yards.

[00:06:45] **HARVEY:** Do you remember hearing about, or knowing about, this kind of division, ethnically, of products? Like lumber was mostly. . . ?

[00:06:56] **TONY:** It was mostly Mexican from my understanding. My uncles and my dad all worked the lumber yard before they organized and went into longshoring.

It was hard work, and hard work usually goes to the low man on the totem pole. The immigrants were looking for work, and they would normally take anything, which usually amounts to the hardest work available. A lot of them wound up in the lumber yards.

[00:07:35] **HARVEY:** Can you remember your first day on the job? The first job you had?

[00:07:38] **TONY:** Yes. [smiles] I got a call from my brother, who was a dispatcher at that time, said they needed more guys and it was a night job. They couldn't replace on this particular job to fill a gang, and I went out on a job and it was the Liberty ships [cargo ships] . Right after the war there were a lot of Liberty ships moving cargo.

I get the slip from my brother and go to the dock, I think it was 190 IN Wilmington there, and I go aboard and ask who the boss is, and they tell me and I give them the slip and he says, "Go to number one, that's where you'll be working." I said "Where's number one?" [chuckles]

So he points me the way. I go up there and there's steam winches and it's noisy as hell and it's dark and the lighting is not all that good, but good enough to work, and I'm scared to death just by the noise, never having been aboard a ship before. I get up to number one and give the slip to the hatch boss then, or the gang leader, I don't know who it was, but then I say, "What should I do?" And he says "Go offshore." [pointing] He pointed, thank goodness, to the water side, and "Help land the beams."

There was one guy up there because they were shorthanded, who was working by himself, so I go up there. There's noisy winches, and he'd already uncovered the top deck and they were uncovering the shelter deck and the top deck beams they had put on the inshore side. They had a deck load of logs on the offshore side and they were putting the beams up there. They hadn't put any up there yet, so I climbed up there with two high logs. There were about three wide and three across. It was wet, and they were latched down with chains. The winch driver brings out the beam, and if you're familiar with the steam winches, if you don't give it a little bit of power, they'll roll on you if you center it, so you constantly have to be giving it a little bit of steam to hold it in place. It's hard to hold it in one place, it's usually bouncing up and down.

So this thing is bouncing up and down. [laughs, gestures] I'm kind of trying to stay away, not get in the way and get hurt, and I'm watching my partner. What he does, I do on the other end, and so then we finally landed. I think we knocked them down, because it was on top of the logs. We get the three beams out and then we go down and it was loading cotton in between burls, if you can picture that, they were these huge. . . [gesturing large round with arms]

I don't know if you know what burls are, but they are something like distorted nuts, these huge distorted nuts. So there are all these holes between these different burls and we have to put cotton in the holes and then once we got above the burls, we kind of leveled out, but I had never worked with anything so heavy. These things are 700 pounds and it takes a while to get the hang of handling them. My poor partner, he must have worked himself to death, because I wasn't much good [chuckles] except to unhook the cotton, I guess. But it was a hard job because we had to put paper around the burls to protect the cotton.

That was my first introduction to longshoring and it gave me second thoughts [chuckles], but it paid well, so I persisted and eventually got the hang of how to work the different commodities. It takes a little time to develop a skill.

[00:11:52] **HARVEY:** You mentioned beams, what do you mean by beams?

[00:11:57] **TONY:** On the Liberty ships and the older ships, they had the hatch openings, which often were, let's

say maybe 20 feet across, and the number one hatch was maybe 25 feet long. On the other hatches was maybe 40 feet long, but number one was a short hatch. Then they'd have slots that they'd have this steel beam that fit into the slots and then they had the hatch board that they would put—they had a little ledge around the hatch and a ledge on the beam—and you put the hatches on these ledges. So when you uncovered, you took the hatches off first. Then there was a place on the beams where you would put the toggles through it, a certain kind of gear that you used to pick up the beam and remove it. That's what I'm talking about when I say a beam. It's a beam essentially that holds a deck in place so that you could load on top of whatever is below it.

[00:13:10] **HARVEY:** I have a wide, general question, what was your view and experience of the union?

[00:13:21] **TONY:** My what?

[00:13:21] **HARVEY:** Your view of the union. How did you perceive the union at that time?

[00:13:25] **TONY:** My dad didn't talk too much about the union—he was a good talker, but he spoke in Spanish mostly. When he had occasion to have conversation, it was usually with adults. Kids were mostly somebody to support and [chuckles] do some of the work around the house. He never conversed to us too much about what happened on the job, but [there is] one thing I always remembered.

This was when I was older and getting ready to go into the service, he didn't care too much for L.B. Thomas, who was at one time a coast committeeman. From what I heard [he] was a good committee man, but because he was a Local 13 product, I guess my dad didn't like his style. From what I understand, he was somewhat of a redneck, and that possibly entered into it.

[00:14:27] **HARVEY:** Possibly. Did your dad talk very much about 1933 and '34? Did he tell you much about it?

[00:14:37] **TONY:** No, like I say, he didn't talk too much about the union per se, but I know he was involved because he was the kind of guy who—besides he was a drinker too. I guess beer kind of gives you a little bit of courage. But I know he was always involved, he wasn't one that would take a back step. If there was trouble, he was right there.

[00:15:10] **HARVEY:** Any specific stories?

[00:15:11] **TONY:** Well, there was one incident that I vaguely recalled, and I was wondering if my memory was accurate because it was a pretty traumatic experience. I envisioned three longshoremen, three men, carrying my dad up the front steps to the porch. He was bleeding from his head, and of course us kids were frightened to death. In '34 I would have been around five at that time and so it was frightening. I had this memory and it wasn't until later when I was talking to a comadre of my parents—which is essentially a very good friend—she was telling me about the time when she was taking care of my dad because of his head injury. I guess he was out cold for a number of days and required care, it must have been a pretty severe wound. So when she was talking about it, I said, "Then what I recall is actually something that happened, not that I was imagining it." As a kid that's a traumatic experience for you.

[00:16:42] **HARVEY:** Did you ever find out what happened?

[00:16:45] **TONY:** No, I never did because by the time I had spoken to this gal, my dad was already dead. He died in 1956.

[00:16:58] **HARVEY:** Ok. What was the best product you ever worked? What was the most tolerable product?

[00:17:05] **TONY:** The best product? In terms of what?

[00:17:08] **HARVEY:** Of a work day, you know, easy product.

[00:17:10] **TONY:** The zeolite was a good product, were in 50 pound sacks, but they were good sized sacks. 50 pounds of, earth I guess they call it in some places, but it's a big sack like that [gestures], same width as a cement sack, but much longer. That was always easy.

They had what we would call plunder, which essentially were commodities of all types that were usually in boxes, but also includes toothpaste and razor blades, stuff like that. I assume they called it plunder because you could easily put it in your pocket, which happened but wasn't encouraged.

[00:18:02] **HARVEY:** Tell me what were in those big sacks again?

[00:18:04] **TONY:** Zeolite, they called it earth as well, I think they use it like a filter for swimming pools or something.

[00:18:15] **HARVEY:** It came in these big bags?

[00:18:18] **TONY:** Oh yes, big bags, and of course they're very light; it's a breeze.

The best cargos are the cargoes that are pre-slung. You just unhook them, which didn't come about early on, but after the M&M [Mechanization and Modernization Agreement of] there was quite a bit of pre-slung stuff. You don't remember too much of the easy stuff, but you're aware of it when you go pick up your job, but you remember more the ugly stuff, the hard stuff.

[00:18:48] **HARVEY:** Can you give us some examples of the ugly stuff or the hard stuff?

[00:18:51] **TONY:** Well, like I say, my first cotton job, I couldn't even move the damn thing, because they were so heavy. You develop the technique later and you learn to use the momentum and your weight. Of course the cotton job is always a hard job, and it's dusty, so it's not too pleasant.

But the worst job—the one I would pick as the worst job is hides and that's because they're nasty. Some have maggots, they're slimy, they slide around, they're hard to stow, if you have any amount at all. To stow on a ship, or discharge from a boxcar. If you're discharging from a boxcar, you're stepping in slime. Of course you have gloves and aprons, but that doesn't do too much. The smell penetrates your clothing, and you just smell, until you get cleaned up. It's a horrible commodity. I'd have to pick that one as the worst, but there are a lot of bad ones.

Working pig iron. Pig iron is kind of like rough bars of iron [gesturing] and they have sharp edges so even if you wear gloves, you will wear out a pair of gloves in a day's work, if you work pig iron. And it's just hard, and it's back breaking because everything, as they say, is assholes and elbows, you're bending down and picking up this stuff and loading it into scows. That is extremely difficult.

[00:20:50] **Anything with dust:** fish meal, bone meal. Bone meal is terrible because it was real flying dust and it would make your nose bleed. I don't know what was in it. But the commodity itself, if you smelled it long enough, it was cause your nose to start bleeding.

[00:21:11] **HARVEY:** How did you work a product like that? How did it come in? Did it come in bulk, did it

come in sacks?

[00:21:18] **TONY:** Bone meal came in in sacks, fish meal came in sacks, and pig iron came in bulk.

Any heavy work [was difficult] . You know drums were terrible until you learned how to do it and it became kind of a snap because there were just a few to unload.

[00:21:42] **HARVEY:** What about activity in the union? I know you were active in the union, can you tell us a bit about your activity in the union?

[00:21:54] **TONY:** When I first started it was just mostly making a living, raising a family. My focus was on my family. We had three boys and a girl. When I first started longshoring, I played a lot of basketball. Between being involved in the leagues playing basketball, and whatever activities were involved—when I got too old or was no longer able to play basketball—I had a bad back—then my kids were all old enough where they were into organized activities like Cub Scouts. They always needed volunteers, so my wife and I always volunteered and then when they started playing sports, I started coaching, and so I did that until my kids were grown. Then once they were past high school age—my youngest was still in high school—I said “Now I have all this time,” especially after I no longer played basketball, I said “I think I’ll get involved.”

This was about 1973, ‘72, ‘73, so I ran for the executive board, but almost quit because there was so much bullshit. After a while you get used to it and then become part of the problem. So that’s how I got started and then two of my brothers had been involved, my older brothers, Frankie and Mike were both dispatchers. Under our constitution you were allowed to run for two years, you ran each year, but maximum two years, and then you had to be out two years. So they were in and out, Frankie was a BA [business agent] and Mike was secretary-treasurer, and my other brother Christy was always on the executive board, so I said, “Let’s continue the tradition of being involved” and actually, Christy and I were on the board for quite a few years together when I first started.

[00:24:19] **HARVEY:** Did you become secretary-treasurer of the local at one point?

[00:24:21] **TONY:** 1977, I was never much of one to want to be in the forefront. I didn’t really seek office, for any good reason—well, I guess there was a good enough reason for me to run.

At one point in time there was a fellow suing the union and he claimed that he had more seniority than what he was being given credit for and it was in order to be promoted. This guy wanted to go on the night dock board when there was a limit of people on the night dock board. By virtue of not having seniority, he was excluded, and so then he sued because he said he had more seniority than what he actually had.

Because he sued, the secretary-treasurer at that time called me in because he knew we were contemporaries, this other fellow and myself. I came in about the same time he did. So he asked me about it and wanted me to talk to the attorney. The attorney asked me to research, because I had an idea of what happened without researching, and this guy was full of prunes. I went to get the records of the—it was [called] the membership committee at that time—and the regular membership meetings, which would indicate when he was initiated.

I had a hard time finding all the records that far back to 1950/51. I found they were in about five or six different places. I finally got the information for the attorney and at the same time I was involved in doing the billing for the local to the coast committee so that we could get reimbursed for contract related legal cases. So I was in and out all the time doing the research and doing the billing, and I see this guy in the office, the secretary-treasurer, and I thought, “This guy is a waste of”—in longshoreman language, you’d say, ‘this guy is a load of dunnage. He’s just a waste.’ I would see how he wasn’t good at the job, not like I figured he should have been. He was so

bad I thought “Man, I’m going to run for secretary and see if I can get this guy out of there.”

So I got elected and thankfully he got out of there, but one year. I would have run again if it was just myself, but it took its toll on my family life, because I’m kind of a 24/7 guy. I immerse myself in it, I take work home.

[waves hand] It was a little too much for my wife, so I didn’t run again after that, but it was a good experience.

[00:27:52] **HARVEY:** Do you care to mention that guy’s name for the record?

[00:27:59] **TONY:** Yes, well, you know...

[00:28:00] **HARVEY:** You’re not required... You don’t have to.

[00:28:03] **TONY:** No... well, it’s Joaquin Hernandez. And he’s a nice guy, but I used to tell him, “You’re an educated idiot.” You know, we’re friends, but he just [has] no common sense in the first place. He would ask you something about an issue, and several times I would write things out to him, and he couldn’t give a damn about the substance, he wanted me to dot the “i” and cross the “t” and put a comma here and a period there. I said, “What the hell does that have to do with what we’re talking about?” And then if he didn’t agree with what my point of view was, I’d say, “You don’t have to agree with me, you asked me what I thought; that’s what I think. You got the authority, you do what you damn well please.” It was that kind of a situation where I said, “We got to get this guy out of here.”

[00:29:08] **HARVEY:** Were there any other issues you remember being important? Political issues or other kinds of issues on the waterfront?

[00:29:18] **TONY:** Well, registration has always been an issue and it’s always been important, especially under the sponsorship system, which was ruled illegal and outlawed, and which our guys didn’t want to turn loose.

I used to carry around an NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] decision in my wallet because the word got around that “Salcido, he’s not in favor of sponsorship.” Well, I got in on a sponsorship. Of course I’m in favor of sponsorship, but once you get ruled against to discontinue it and not even carry on any semblance of the same program. . . You’re foolish to go up against the federal government [gestures] because you’re just going to ask for more trouble. So I used to carry the NLRB decision around with me that says—it essentially laid out the outlawing of the sponsorship system. So when the guys would come up to me and say, “Well how come you don’t want—” I would just show it to them and say, “It’s not that I don’t want it, we are obligated not to do anything that even resembles it, or we’ll get in trouble.” That was always a very, very, important issue until they got the [?Kagel?] system as it’s presently set up.

The other issue was a steady men issue. Those two issues have always been, I think, extremely important and some of those things we haven’t been able to do anything about.

[00:31:03] **HARVEY:** Want to go into steady men a little bit?

[00:31:07] **TONY:** Well, I kind of have a different understanding than a lot of other people, especially other ports, because they’re smaller and have more control of their membership. We got so many crazies down there, no matter what category you want to name, we’ve got somebody who will fit it. But, we inherited a steady system when we brought the crane drivers into Local 13 in the middle-fifties.

The operating engineers, Local 12, had about 30-32 crane drivers, Strad [Strad-o-lift] drivers too in the lumber yards. The crane drivers and Strad drivers were both Local 12 of the Operating Engineers [International Union

of Operating Engineers] , and evidently for some reason they were not too satisfied with their position, these 30 guys, with the Operating Engineers. So they made overtures to Benny McDonald—I remember him in particular, he was president at one time for them; he drove crane too so he knew some of these guys—that they would be interested in coming into the ILWU. This was in the middle-fifties.

So they did, they disaffiliated, waited a year, and came into Local 13 with their jobs, so their jobs came with them and that's how, down there at least, we got the jurisdiction of the crane driving. As time went on, there was more and more work for cranes, because the different cargo, it got heavier, and things evolve. When these guys were all working, or there were no crane drivers available, then they would take longshoremen that could operate the cranes and send them to these crane jobs. Then, one of the original crane drivers would finish his job, and he would come to the hall and there'd be no crane jobs, but there'd be a longshoremen driving a crane. They said, "Well, hey, that's not right, that's our job, our work, we brought that work here."

So they went to court. The NLRB, or I forget which it was, they made sure they had jurisdiction over the crane work and it essentially made them the steady men, if the work was there, it was theirs and nobody else's. So that's how the thing started—

[00:34:08] **HARVEY:** That was before M&M, right?

[00:34:09] **TONY:** That was before M&M, yes. They were having talks already about implementing an M&M, so when M&M came along we already had a steady workforce in place and they [M&M] just expanded on it. There's always been favoritism in advancement from longshoring to being a crane driver. So it took some time for things to evolve and kind of make things a little fairer, which also involved a suit.

I don't know if you're familiar with the Bates case? The Bates case was a discriminatory case brought against Local 13 down there because the young Blacks, in particular, were not getting a chance to become crane drivers and they saw Anglos with less seniority than them who were related to the original crane drivers being given the opportunity to become crane drivers and so then you wind up with contract problems and these different things being put into the contract about steady crane drivers. It was a hassle.

Now, I don't know how it is, but I guess it's kind of developed into a fair program. When I was involved, it was in a transitional period, and it was just a problem all the time, because the union was trying to eliminate the steady system as it had developed, and try to get some type of system where everybody would have an equal chance. A guy with the low R's [registration numbers, indicating more seniority in the union] would go to work. As far as the steady crane drivers were concerned they were never able to implement it down there.

[00:36:25] **HARVEY:** What about the problem of "doubling back"? Did you have any take on that?

[00:36:29] **TONY:** Doubling back? Oh, that's ugly. In my opinion, that's so anti-union. Before the new generation came along and started getting involved in the political arena in Local 13, the old timers definitely [were against doubling back] , but like myself, who was the first generation after the old timers, were just dead set against it. But the newer breed, as the generations developed and went on, like second, third, fourth, they just had a different look at it and were more into making money. If you listen to Harry Bridges, he'd say, 'Let's have a six-hour day.' He didn't have a lot of leisure time, and it never developed that way, but essentially that was his thinking: spend more time with your family and enjoy your time off the job.

I especially remember Rene—I forget his last name—became president [of Local] and that's when they went into doubling up our local, Local 13. Local 94, which was the foremen's local, had started it previously. I think they kind of started it, because they didn't want to get enough people into their local to handle the work so they could get all the work they wanted. As a result of having low membership, they didn't have enough guys to work

all the shifts, so they started doubling up, instead of bringing more members in. Our guys would always point out, “The foremen’s local does it.” “Well that’s the foremen’s local, that’s not us.” We maintained that for quite a while until, I think, the early nineties, it might have been the late eighties, but I think it came around the early nineties.

Rene Herrera, was the president at the time.

[00:38:47] **HARVEY:** Is it still an issue?

[00:38:50] **TONY:** Yes, in fact—well, I’ve been retired almost 20 years, so I don’t keep my finger on the pulse of the union, what’s going on. Mostly I hear rumors, or read bulletins occasionally.

They just discontinued it a short while back, not because it was the right thing to do. They discontinued it in order to punish the membership for not coming to meetings, or something, I forget. There’s talk now of reimplementing it, I don’t know if it’s been re-implemented. You might talk to the president of Local 13, he’s here, I saw him. Chris Viramontes, he could give you that information, if it’s back. But it’s such a non-union program, I just can’t understand union people going for it. You know, you could put more people to work.

[00:39:55] **HARVEY:** Tony, do you remember having any take on the Unemployed 500, ‘46-’49. I know that a little before your time, slightly.

[00:40:02] **TONY:** Because on my research, I did a lot of research on Unemployed 500, and I worked with a lot of those guys. A lot of Black guys, you know? In April of 1946, because of a variety of things, but mostly because the veterans were coming back, people were coming back off defense jobs, people were coming back from other ports, that they moved to San Francisco in particular. Right after the war the cargo in L.A. just dropped off completely and San Francisco had a lot of military cargo, so quite a few of them moved to ‘Frisco [San

Francisco] . All these people were coming back and we’d had all these hires during the war, during the forties.

Especially from ‘42 to even as late as early ‘45, they were still bringing people in because they needed the bodies to handle the military cargo.

So now you got this surplus of—short timers I guess you’d call them—they said, “We don’t have enough work for everyone, we got to honor the guys coming back who took withdrawals and so we’re going to have to let these 500 guys go.” The motion was they would be the first allowed back when the work warranted it. Well, it never happened, because the sponsorship system entered into it. And I’m sure because a large part of the Unemployed 500 were Blacks.

That’s where, I think, my dad got that thing about L.B. Thomas, you know? I think L.B. Thomas is associated with, “We’re going to keep this a lily white local.” I’ve heard that quote and I’ve read that several times, but can’t attribute it [directly] to L.B. Thomas, it might have just been somebody, you know? There was definitely a lot of discrimination in those days, and unfortunately sometimes by the leadership.

The Unemployed 500 were let go, they were given several options, they could disassociate themselves from the union and get their, I think, initiation fee back. I’m not sure. Or they could hang around and get work, and that’s where they got the Unemployed 500 title cause when they were dispatched, if they hung around, they’d say “on the unemployment board” or “the 500 board” when they called them for dispatch. Or they could leave the area.

According to the motion, they were supposed to be the first back, well now they start bringing in sons of

members, you know, the sponsorship system. These guys are on the outside looking in. These young guys didn't have any experience longshoring, how come they're coming back? That developed a suit on their part and they eventually got in, but a lot of them didn't. It created a lot of lawsuits, more than one. Eventually they came in. That's right around the time that Taft-Hartley was passed and then tied in with the Unemployed 500 coming back was the sponsorship system and the fathers wanting to bring their kids in.

When the 500 came back, at the same time, because of Taft-Hartley, they created a B and A registration system where the B registrants were non-union and the A registrants were union. That way, it protected the dispatch hall because they were dispatching both union and non-union men, and they were dispatching a registered workforce.

That was the key, making it a registered workforce instead of a closed shop only open to union men. The Unemployed 500, there were so many lawsuits going that they gave them a registration date ahead of anybody else who was currently working on the docks as an ID or as a casual, because most of us were sons or brothers of longshoremen. Rather than take the chance that we were going to have more seniority than these

Unemployed 500, who had already been working on the waterfront, they gave them a prior registration date. They also made them, a lot of them, class "B" registrants, rather than class "A," so they gave them a prior—my date, I think, was June 1951—and I think the last Unemployed 500 as a result of a lawsuit probably was in March, which gave him more seniority as a registrant.

[00:45:54] **HARVEY:** So some of them got back on?

[00:45:56] **TONY:** Oh yes, quite a few of them got back on, but I would say the majority probably didn't because a lot of them moved back home, a lot of them were from the South.

HARVEY. Ok. How about the 1971 strike? Can you tell us what you did then? How your family survived that?

Yes. Well, it all depends on your lifestyle, I think. We always had a little cushion in the bank and so it didn't affect us in terms of suffering any want for anything, for food. Of course you have to make adjustments in your spending, but it didn't bother me personally. It did some other people. I was disappointed in the '71 strike because we didn't get anything out of it, really.

The main issue, as I recall down south [southern California], was the CFS [container freight stuffing] work. We were losing the CFS work, which we considered—if you were going to put cargo in a container, it's just like loading the ship except you're loading it in a box to put on the ship. We were losing that and it was a big concern in terms of jurisdiction.

The other one was a steady man issue about this time there started to be more crane work and so there was a steady workforce. We were concerned about that, in trying to limit the way the steady workforce controlled the crane jobs.

Those two issues, at least from my point of view, we were concerned with down south and we wanted to try to resolve some of them, and were unsuccessful. I guess the whole strike, we just kind of marked time. We didn't gain much and we didn't lose much. They had wage control at that time and so we didn't get anything there. Then afterward, they had some kind of negotiations, I guess maybe to get a little wage increase, but I don't recall it being a hell of a lot. I think it was, not a disaster, but just a futile strike.

[00:48:38] **HARVEY:** What did you do, yourself, during that strike?

[00:48:40] **TONY:** Well, we picketed. We were assigned to the dock at Long Beach 247, which was pretty good.

I liked the outdoors there, but one of the guys who liked to drink at one of the local bars by the dispatch hall, got us reassigned to the dispatch hall. So we were kind of sergeant of arms around the dispatch hall, but we were on call in case they needed bodies at any particular troubled spot.

[00:49:07] **HARVEY:** Did you ever get called out?

[00:49:08] **TONY:** No, we never did. No, but I recall during the steam schooner times in the late forties/early fifties, it was amazing the solidarity the workforce had, because if you were working on a ship and they said, “Hey, we need guys over at—we’re having trouble at. . .,” and they’d name a dock, everybody would just leave the ship and go over to the other dock, I mean no questions asked. It was really kind of amazing, you know.

I picketed when the Sea Trader and the packaged lumber started to come in. I picketed at a dock there, trying to resolve some of the negotiations going on around the steam schooner issue. But other than that, I’ve picketed maybe at a [inaudible] _____ tried to organize. Nothing real serious, no bad events related to picketing or contract negotiations.

[00:50:25] **HARVEY:** Did you retire by the 2002 lockout?

[00:50:30] **TONY:** Yes, I retired in November 1994.

[00:50:36] **HARVEY:** How old were you then?

[00:50:38] **TONY:** Sixty-five, that’s when I retired.

[00:50:40] **HARVEY:** How come you decided to retire? Some people don’t.

[00:50:43] **TONY:** Well, I mean, why not? I lived for my vacations, I worked for my vacations, and I was always a five day-a-week man. I would work ringers. I worked as long as 14 days straight, but usually I would do it for a purpose; because I was going to be leaving. My vacations were always whatever I was allotted at that time, and usually longer, because we could stay away as long we wanted, as long as we cleared through LRC [Longshore Relations Committee] that we were going to have a leave of absence or something. I did take a lot of six-week plus vacations; spent two months at a time in Europe four or five different times. I was always one to enjoy my leisure time. I figured, ‘The hell with work, you know. Work for a purpose, to support your family, but don’t make it life’s goal to work just to accumulate material wealth.’

[00:51:56] **HARVEY:** When did you get involved with the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association and how come you decided to do that?

[00:52:02] **TONY:** I joined right away. I think it’s a good organization. You form a power group of sorts, you exert a little influence on the political arena. And you see your buddies. That’s the best part, you get to see some of the guys you worked with, which is a big thing I think is missing on the waterfront today. Not intentionally, but because of the way the handling of cargo has developed, everybody’s isolated now. When I started you had anywhere from 50-200 guys on a job site and you had a lot of camaraderie. You worked in a gang, you had a lot of camaraderie with the guys you worked with, you socialized together. Now getting involved in the Pensioners you see some of these guys you haven’t seen for a while because some go clerking or some go bossing or some go nights, you lose track of them. But it’s always nice to rekindle old friendships; that’s a big part of it.

Plus, whatever activities the Pensioners do, they have community involvement programs to help the community, which are good. Again, like I say, I don’t run for any of the offices in the Pensioners because when I make a commitment I feel that I’m obligated—say I run for the executive board. I feel obligated to go to all the board

meetings, barring sickness or something like that, but we [Tony and family] travel so much, we never know when we're going to be available. For instance, coming up to this meeting, to this convention, I left right after the Pensioners meeting on Wednesday, which was September fifth, and the convention starts tomorrow, so it took me 10 days to get here. We just were beating around the country enjoying what the outdoors has to offer, which is great.

[00:54:20] **HARVEY:** We usually ask a big, wide question at the end. Looking back at the end, what has it all meant to you as you look back? Your whole experience with the union?

[00:54:35] **TONY:** It was hard work at first. You know, who wants to be a longshoreman and work so damn hard? Especially when there was a lot of dirty cargos, and when you first start you get all the hard work and the dirty cargos. That's just the nature of the beast. So who wants to be a longshoreman? The key is, it has always paid well.

What I wanted to do after I came out of the service was become a policeman [laughs] but, I failed the physical, my eyes kept me out. In those days, they were very stringent as to the physical requirements of a cop, you couldn't wear glasses, you had to be 5 feet 9 inches, you had to have a two-inch chest expansion, which—they want Superman out there, I guess. But when that failed, I was going to junior college and playing basketball. Basketball took a big part of my early years when I was still active, so that's the main thing I really wanted to do, was play basketball, but I was never good enough to make it a paid job.

The next best thing was something that was easy to get into and my brother said, "We need some extra guys on the job today," so I said "OK, I'm ready." It paid well, that is why I got into it in the first place, and it was easy to get into. I didn't set out to be a longshoreman, it's just the way things developed.

[00:56:10] **HARVEY:** Ideal. Thank you for participating in the program. You want to add anything?

[00:56:23] **TONY:** No, but I was thinking about what the question was to begin with. I more or less told you how I got into it, but the one big thing is, without the union—I read the PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] annual report. My god, if you see what it cost the employer, sometimes I question whether we're worth it, really. But I don't deny that we should be living comfortably and I would like to get this message to the younger guys.

Bill Lawrence [former Local 13 member, former PCPA president] always said,—when I first came in Bill was one of the presidents—"Give them a good day's work for a good day's pay." I think more and more the present generation, from what I see, feels entitled to all these benefits that these workers of the past worked hard to gain for themselves, and they really don't appreciate what they've got. It behooves them to go on the job and be productive so they can maintain what we've got. Not only that, but the more productive they are, the less inclined the employer is to get rid of them.

I don't know how you could do it, but I would like the present workers to be aware of that. Go out there and give them a good day's work, you're getting a good day's pay. That's what's important. The reason you have all these good benefits and money is because you have a good, strong union. You have togetherness and solidarity, and that's what you have to maintain. Hopefully we'll go on into the future with the union. That's it, that's the message I would like to leave to anybody watching the video.

[00:58:43] **HARVEY:** Thank you very much, Tony. Thank you so much for participating.